

SOME
REASONS

TO MOVE

Protestant Dissenters

To be for the taking off

PENAL LAWS, yea and TESTS too,

On their having good Security,

They shall not be exposed to suffering any
more for RELIGION.

In a Letter to a Dissenter.



LONDON,

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*Some Reasons to move Protestant Dissenters to be
for the taking off Penal Laws, yea and Tests
100, &c.*

S I R,

COnsider, I beseech you, the Convictions you have profess'd to lye under, touching the great *Injury* done unto, and the *Disbony* that has been brought upon what you take to be Christ's Gospel, and the sincere Professors of it, by *Penal Laws*. Was it not by them, that in all Ages Thousands of Holy Martyrs have perished? and by them that the Estates and Families of many more have been ruined? Was it not by them that the Light of the Gospel hath been put under a Bushel, whereby Multitudes have been kept in Darkness to their Eternal Ruine? And was it not by them that many Men have been prevail'd with to put their Consciences on such a stretch, as in some has been followed with a Fatal Searedness, and in others with the greatest Anguish of Despair? Have you not said that these violent Ways are not the Ways of the Lord? that he never directed us to use any such Engines in Defence of his Truths? It's well known that our Lord dwelt amongst *Blasphemers*, and his Disciples amongst the *Grossest Idolaters*; And yet the Lord Christ doth only by the Word shew 'em their sin, not suffering his Disciples to cry for Fire from Heaven to Consume them. And his Disciples, in their Day, followed his Example, endeavouring to overcome Evil with Good. Besides, *Paul*, the great Apostle of the *Gentiles*, left it on Record, That *they who are after the Flesh*, persecute *those that are born after the Spirit*; That the *Weapons of the Christian Warfare are not Carnal, but Spiritual*;

and that our Lord destroys all Errors by the Brightness of his Coming, even by the Sword of the Spirit, that goeth out of his Mouth, which is the Word of God.

Let us then be content, that those *Penal Laws*, and *Tests*, which are Carnal Weapons, and which never serv'd the Interest of Christ, be laid aside; rejoicing, if you may have the comfortable Opportunity of publishing his Truth, with Peace, and Quietness, unto the World, especially Considering

That this was the thing you prayed for in the Day of your Calamity. Call to mind then the many Groans, and Sighs, the many Sorrows and Vexations, that have been the Product of your Late Sufferings, and think upon the many Prayers and Supplications, which with much Fervour you poured out before the Lord for the present Ease you enjoy, and for a Continuance of that Ease. And can you seriously think on these Things, and not bless God for it, and use all proper Methods for its Establishment?

Again, Consider, How very angry your old Persecutors are for your receiving Ease and Relief: Behold their Threatnings, and know, that if ever it comes within their Power once more, they will be more severe than ever. Did they lade you with an heavy Yoke? they will add to your Yoke; Did they Chastise you with *Whips*? they will then Chastise you with *Scorpions*, and make their little Finger thicker than their Loyns have been.

But some it may be will say, That they are for taking off the *Penals Laws*, but not the *Tests*: But don't they know, That the *Tests* are of the same Nature with *Penal Laws*; and that so long as one *Penal Law* is kept up, as those who are for that one do justify all the rest, so they are in danger of having all, with seven Devils worse than themselves, to return upon them. And don't you know, my good Friend, how unreasonable a thing it is to expect, That the King should consent to the Continuation of those
Tests,

Tests, which rob him of the Service of those in whom he can mostly confide and trust? How then can you, or any Man of sense, hope for an Abolition of the *Penal Laws* that are against you, whilst you are resolv'd for the keeping up those *Tests* that are against Men of the same Religion with His Majesty? But let us a little more closely enquire into this Point. The parting with the *Tests*, is either in it self *Lawful*, or *Unlawful*. If Unlawful, by what Law? Nothing is Unlawful, but what is disconsonant or contrary to some Law. And what Law is it that obliges us to be for the establishment of the *Test-Law*? You cannot say it is a *Divine Law* that requir'd the Parliament to make this *Test-Law*, nor that any Divine Law will be broken if the Parliament destroy it; and if there be no Divine Law making the Repeal unlawful, there is no Supream *Lex legum* of the Land that call'd on our Legislators to make or continue it. To abolish the *Test-Laws* therefore is *Lawful*; and if Lawful, no doubt, but at this time it is become highly *Expedient*, and *Necessary*: The Ease of tender Consciences, the Peace of the whole Nation, and the Advancing Christ's Interest in the World, makes it absolutely necessary, that we part with whatever we may lawfully, for the Repeal of *Penal Laws*.

But further, If you may lawfully part with the present Tests, won't your stiff Adherence to 'em make it manifest, That if Penal Laws be continued, 'twill be long of you? and will you not thereby bring upon your own Soul the guilt of all those cruel Sufferings the Innocent may be hereafter expos'd unto.

To these Considerations, add another about your own avowed Opinion, touching the Evil and *Sinfulness* of Penal Laws, That by them an Invasion is made on Gods Empire, our Conscience, and that they are contrary to the Word of God. And had you not been under some Fears, that Popery would gain by their Repeal, I doubt not but you wou'd be for it. But if the Laws were Evil, when
you

you suffered the smart of their Penalties, they are still Evil; and whoever is for their Continuance, whether directly or indirectly, he is either directly or indirectly for the doing Evil; and how glorious soever his Pretences may be; how good soever his Ends are, it must be acknowledged, that he is for *the doing Evil that Good may come thereof*; which is, as if he would lye for God, and by Sin promote his Glory, than which nothing should be more abhorred by every good Man. Verily a man ought rather to trust God with Events, than sin against him to prevent a bad one. But in the present Case there is no such Danger of a mischievous Event; for the parting with Penal Laws and Tests, on the Security His Majesty is pleas'd to offer, the Protestant Dissenters will be at ease, the Partition Wall between them and the Church of *England* will be broken down, and all the Fears of Popery that remain, will do no more hurt than serve as so many powerful Motives to an entire Protestant Union, than which there cannot be a greater Security against Popery. Now the Church of *England*, because she has got the Penal Laws on her side, is the common Enemy, that all other Parties in the Nation are to fence against. But if Penal Laws be once taken off, and the Papists manifest the least Disposition towards the turning Penal Laws upon us; *They* will be esteemed by all the common Enemy, and those Dissenters who now joyn with the Papist to *get* Liberty, will most Cordially joyn with the Church of *England* to *keep* it. It's Liberty that the Dissenters are for; and with whomsoever they joyn to procure it, they do but joyn with them in attempts to settle a Protestant Doctrine.

Think then on these things, and see whether you have any Reason to sin against God, by being for the continuance of Penal Laws and Tests; seeing thereby, that you may escape a fancied, you run into a real Danger. And fix thus much on your Soul, Penal Laws and Tests may hurt you,

you, but they can never help you; they have oft serv'd, but never yet serv'd the Interest of Jesus Christ; and therefore that Religion is greatly to be suspected, that cannot live any longer than she has Penal Laws for her Walls and Bulwarks.

One Word more, and I have done with you. Flatter not your self with the Expectation of Liberty under a Church of *England* Successor; for, tho I doubt not, but that His Majesty hath laid down such a glorious Example, as will be imitated by his Successors; yet, if Penal Laws be not now removed, they'l not be then easily taken away. For, tho the Prince that succeeds, will most industriously endeavour it, yet such will be the Opposition that our high Churchmen will then make against it, that the Prince will be provok'd to say, These Sons of *Zeruiah* are too hard for me. The same Noise that is now made against the taking off the Tests, will then be made against a Repeal of Penal Laws. Whoever will consult the various Methods these high Churchmen have used to Cajole and Abuse you, will see cause to conclude, That you cannot run a greater hazard, than to put any Trust or Confidence in them. And know, that whatever the Principles of *Roman* Catholics have been, or are, its now their Interest to be for Liberty; and such are their Circumstances, that they cannot be secure themselves, but by proceeding on a Bottom that will make you as safe as they can hope to be. If there should be any Room left for the reviving Penal Laws, they will be most in danger of falling under the Severity of their Lash. But it hath been, and it still is the Principle of the Church of *England*, to continue Penal Laws against you; and as they sufficiently declare they judg it their Interest too; and I am sure they are more able to destroy you by Penal Laws, than the Papists can. If then you reject the Ease now offer'd, how can you rationally hope to have it under a Church of *England* Successor.

for? Have you forgotten the fair Promises the Churchmen made the Dissenter, and the many Tricks they us'd to defeat all his late Majesties Endeavours, and your Expectations? and don't you see how much they at this time oppose his Present Majesty, and are against the ease of those of his Religion? And will they not, think you, take heart, and be more resolute in doing their utmost to spoil all designs of Grace to Dissenters under a Successor? Now there is an Opportunity put into your hands, have a care, therefore, lest you lose it: If you lose this, whilst you live you may never have another, and then instead of making your self and Posterity happy with a blessed Ease, you'll make the Ages to come Miserable, and bring all their Curses upon your own head.

Thus much I have urg'd for the sake of the weaker Sort amongst you; being morally certain, That both in City and Country, the most Learned, Pious, and Wise Dissenters of all Perswasions, both amongst the Ministry and Gentry, are abundantly satisfied in the *Safety*, *Reasonableness*, and *Necessity* of parting with the *Penal Laws* and *Tests*, on their being effectually secured from Persecution. Farewel.

F I N I S.